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fury of Athalia"—Berlioz knows his retreat and will try to preserve him.

Ruminating thus, the great Irish bell in the Eastern gallery strikes eight, the fountains begin to play, the policemen take their places, M. Ducroquet's apprentice approaches the organ of his master meditating the new polka with which he intends to favor us—the manufacturers from Lyons are coming, and the diamonds, prudently hidden during the night, begin to reappear. Berlioz is beginning to feel sleepy, and is just nodding on the stool of Erard's Grand Piano, when his arm is touched, and he sees Thalberg. "Ah Confrère—the jury is assembling, and we must be diligent—there are 32 musical snuff-boxes, 24 accordions, and 13 bombardons, for us to examine to-day!"

A FIRST IMPRESSION OF THE GENIUS OF HECTOR BERLIOZ.

Contributed by E. HOLMES.

SINCE the first production of *Fidelio* in England, we have listened to nothing with such excitement and enthusiasm as to some of the compositions of M. Berlioz, performed in his very interesting concert on Monday, at Drury-lane. The discovery of a new pen in the art, exercised in the highest and most serious departments of music, with all the grave intention of a Beethoven or a Gluck, and in his lofty and independent walk realising effects which delight the imagination and warm the sympathies of the hearer, is no slight event. We the more cordially acknowledge the powerful impression made upon us by this first hearing of the compositions of M. Berlioz, because we went among the most mistrusting and infidel of the audience. Detraction and false criticism in professional whispers and newspaper paragraphs had predisposed us to expect a critical penance on the occasion; and this, coupled with a somewhat pardonable unwillingness hastily to believe in original genius, or that the implements of the great German masters had passed in reversion to a Frenchman, rendered us anticipative of anything but pleasure. Surprise and gratification were complete, as all these prejudices were dispersed before the beautiful, the original and poetical effects of the music; and we can only say, that if Berlioz is not Beethoven, he who can maintain such an activity of attention during four hours, by the frequency of original and interesting conceptions, must be a worthy follower of that master, and a poet musician of no common stamp. We left the house with an earnest desire to hear the whole of the music again, and as soon as possible. Compositions that are not only new in their plan and in their ideas, but which exercise an immense orchestra and chorus in perpetually new combinations, involve a responsibility in the hearing, which it is not very easy to fulfil on a single occasion. We are glad to have been thus dazzled by novelty in a variety of directions, and often to have laboured under a sense of imperfect admiration. It gives good promise of future pleasure.

The concert of M. Berlioz was performed on the stage by 250 vocal and instrumental performers, and the execution of the elaborate and difficult music was alike creditable on the part of the orchestra, the solo singers, and the chorus. The first part comprised an overture to the *Car-nival of Rome*, a romance called the "Young Shepherd," sung by Miss Miran, and a symphony called *Harold*, in four parts, with an obligato part for the tenor, played by Hill. The second part contained the first and second acts of *Faust*; and for the third we had a cavatina from

Bevenuto Cellini, sung by Madame Dorus Gras, a chorus of "Souls in Purgatory," from the Requiem of M. Berlioz, and the finale of a triumphal symphony.

Throughout the whole of these compositions the most honourable ambition of the artist is evident; there is no descent to vulgarity or appeal to the common ear. Even in the songs, an elevation of style and an originality of design, which the musician will best appreciate, are perceptible. It has been said that Berlioz has no melody. How then does he contrive to fix the attention of his hearers for hours? The fact is that he has melody—though not of the conventional standard—and he knows how to set it off, too, by exquisite harmonising and effects of instrumentation. We confess that, to our taste, some of the most beautiful things of the evening were the choruses from *Faust*, in the second part. The Easter Hymn is a noble composition. Recollection of the situation of this hymn in the original tragedy made us expect mere simplicity; but the piece is extraordinarily developed. When the voices of the men succeed those of the women in pealing choral grandeur, an immense effect is produced from the original treatment of the harmonies and intervals of the voices. Here, too, is a long and masterly pedal point well worth hearing. There was also in this part another beautiful and melodious chorus, succeeded by a sylph dance, so exceedingly fanciful and pretty, that the audience could not fail of encoring it. The chorus of Souls in Purgatory, in which the voices in octaves keep up a little plaintive monotonous phrase on the dominant of D minor, while the instruments continue, in the fugued style, a stream of severe counterpoint, is highly interesting and effective. The word original is too feeble and conventional to describe the effect of these works, which are pure creations. Then in the second part we had also a song of *Mephistophiles* admirably accompanied by brass instruments, a beautiful symphony illustrative of the ærial flight of Faust and his companion, and an Hungarian march, changing minor and major alternately, so triumphant and animating, that it would do honour to Beethoven. This march was even lately on the point of revolutionising Hungary. It was received with stormy enthusiasm, and played twice without hesitation. Many other things would have been re-demanded had time and consideration of the fatigues of the composer and performers permitted. The music demands incessant attention from the orchestra, and an unwonted accuracy and finish in the execution of difficult traits.

The mere physical result of this extraordinary performance puts the stamp of a great master on Berlioz. No man, by the resources of noise, of contrast, or of studied effect, is able to elevate the spirit of another man. The greater the means employed, so much the more fatal and imminent is failure. The heart is not dilated or the breath suspended on light occasions, and when such a state of sensibility is excited, we may be sure that feeling and imagination have been at work before. The musical world, who are prepared to go all lengths with the poetry of the art, and in opposition to those school dogmas which hold music in everlasting trammels, should hear Berlioz. They will see that the peculiar novelty of his mind and fancy are unfitted to the shackles of systems, and thank him for his courage in resisting them. This was an effort due to his own self-estimate, and he has carried it out during twenty years with indomitable resolution and perseverance. He has shaken the thrones of professors in conservatories, and won in a battle in which every unworthy art and ungenerous imputation have been used to put him down. There is no fear of the purity of the art being endangered through the example of Berlioz. Avarice cannot be tempted by it, for men do not get rich by composing great symphonies and choruses; and as for the pretension of mere idle vanity, that is soon flogged off the stage. The muse of high composition is still wooed in the beggar's garb. Three things effectually allay our

fears of any influx of daring offenders to subvert the orthodoxy of the symphony. First, the difficulty of composing; then of bringing the work to a hearing; and, lastly, of paying the expenses. These are labours of Hercules, tremendous enough to deject any mean spirit; and he who accomplishes them deserves to enjoy his freedom unmolested. It must be the effect of real merit, and of circumstances concurrent with the progress of music, which, after twenty years of eventful artist life, places M. Berlioz, not from any speculation of his own, at the head of a large orchestra and chorus at Drury-lane. He does not come out under the auspices of a coterie, or the patronage of the Philharmonic Society, but appeals at once to the suffrages of the public. His whole quiet course shows a man who despises a puff and all the mean arts of notoriety. But nothing has ever more surprised us than the disingenuousness of the criticism that could so long have obscured the existence of his extraordinary powers. Paris is probably the most unfortunate city in Europe for an artist of genius to obtain his true position. But it will be for the honor of England to place the stamp on this master; and if the public support concerts enough to make him known, we do not fear it. We earnestly trust that this will be done. It is matter which ought to be dealt with in the spirit of history, and with a great superiority to national considerations. The occasion gives fresh life to criticism, a duty rendered irksome by the little novelty which its daily routine presents. There is peculiar pleasure in awakening the public to a sense of powers still capable of the noblest fruits under due encouragement, and of asserting ourselves on the side of any truth held in debate. We hope that Berlioz may still revive the torpid genius of composition, and enjoy his well-won laurels.

In preferring the vocal to the instrumental compositions of M. Berlioz, as generally more compact and complete in the design, we unconsciously recognise the progress of his genius—its regular march of novelty and improvement. The symphony called *Harold*, was written long before *Faust*, and does not, in completeness as a symphony, realize the effect of the vocal fragments. The idea of a symphony with an obligato tenor part seems preposterous. To exchange the usual form of allegro, adagio, scherzo, &c., for an *affiche*, entitled “Harold on the Mountains;” “Scenes expressive of melancholy, happiness, and joy;” “March of pilgrims singing their evening prayer;” “The mountaineer of the Abruzzi to his mistress,” &c., alarms conventionalism. But listen to the artist as he proceeds—the solemn opening and effect of the basses, the picturesque and characteristic melodies of the wind instruments, with the original employment of the tenor obligato in passages full of interest, and your attention is rivetted, you are convinced that this is no work of ambitious eccentricity.* Various are the springs of musical thought in different minds. It is Berlioz’s province to paint, and nature leads him in the new paths of her unfailing variety. The charm and influence of the classical masters are revived in him in new combinations. There is great poetical extravagance and daring in the music,

but hard and painful harmonies and laborious originality there are not. Good things occur sufficiently often to keep the mind ever active. The last movement of the symphony called “Revels of Brigands,” is the one in which, perhaps, he has least carried out his intention. His instrumentation is dazzling and beautiful. The instruments appear in a new order of arrangement in his composition. The double bass gains a great importance; it is always independent, and is sometimes written in first and second parts. The effects of this instrument were admirable. The harp, too, was released from its eternal commonplace arpeggios to be employed in a few effective and interesting notes. The wind instruments are employed with like originality, and a distinctness in their several systems, which was particularly worthy of notice in the first overture.

During the performance we were scarcely once reminded of any other music—except for a casual effect the Symphony in A of Beethoven. With respect to the plaint of the “Souls in Purgatory,” there exists a Madrigal of Durante on that subject, and in the last chorus of Cherubini’s Requiem in C minor, the idea of the eternal repose of death is expressed in a long-continued phrase of monotony. But nothing of this touches the honourable independence of Berlioz. His nature is evidently impassioned—his idiosyncrasy marked and characteristic. The grave and large manner of handling which is perceived in the movement of his basses and parts, does not exclude in him a large range of fancy and feeling—the tender—the light and sportive. We feel convinced that renewed hearings of his works will confirm him in opinion as an artist capable of fulfilling the vast responsibilities of his mission, that he will extend the sphere of music, and place its powers in a new light—a consummation devoutly to be wished.—From the “Atlas” of Feb. 12. 1848.

Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

WORCESTER FESTIVAL.—The Festival of the three choirs—Worcester, Gloucester, and Hereford—commenced on the 26th. Mr. Blagrove was the leader; Mr. Donne, conductor; Mr. Amott, organist; and Mr. Townshend Smith, accompanist. The Festival opened with the Morning Service. Handel’s *Dettingen Te Deum* was given in all its grandeur. Miss Dolby, Miss Williams, Mr. Lockey, and Mr. Machin, were the performers. The anthem was by Dr. Elvey, the psalms by Tallis and Mendelssohn. The numbers who attended were 1447, about 200 less than on the first day of the last Festival: the collection amounted to £292. The concert at the College-hall was very thinly attended; not more than 200 persons were present; the concert was supported by Miss Birch, Mdlle. Cruvelli, Miss Williams, Miss Dolby, Mr. Reeves, Mr. Lockey, Mr. Machin, and Herr Formès; Mr. Blagrove playing a violin solo (De Beriot) in faultless style. The reception of Mdlle. Cruvelli was anything but enthusiastic. The oratorio selected for the second day was the *Elijah*; Miss Birch taking the principal soprano parts, with the exception of “Hear ye Israel,” given with great power by Cruvelli, but with a peculiar accent that impaired the effect of the words; Miss Birch gave a fine reading of her music; Miss Dolby and Miss Williams divided the contralto, and Mr. Reeves and Mr. Lockey the tenor solos. The aisles and great western gallery were not nearly so well filled as yesterday, and there was a falling off in point of numbers, as compared with the attendance on the second day of the last Worcester Festival, of about 1200. The concert on the 27th—a selection of eight morceaux from Spohr’s *Jessonda*—was, generally

*The obligato tenor part in his symphony was composed for Paganini, who had latterly taken up the “grand Viola.” The generous interest of Paganini in the young composer, his noble gift, and above all, the terms in which he conveys it, do honour to his memory. In the history of music there is scarcely a parallel to this incident, which is alike elevating to both parties. Paganini’s expressions in the accompanying letter are peculiarly remarkable at this moment. Here is the translation of his Italian letter:—

“Mon cher ami,—Beethoven mort, il n’y avait que Berlioz qui pût le faire revivre; et moi qui ai goûté vos divines compositions dignes d’un génie tel que vous, je crois de mon devoir de vous prier de vouloir bien accepter, comme un hommage de ma part, vingt mille francs qui vous seront remis par M. le Baron de Rothschild sur la présentation de l’incluse. Croyez moi toujours votre affectionné
“Paris, le 18 Décembre, 1838.”

“NICOLÒ PAGANINI.”

Berlioz is a native of Grenoble, and by the locality of his birth-place seems almost as narrowly to have escaped being a Spaniard as Mozart did being an Italian.